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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the nature of sexist attitudes among male university students. A Situational Attitude Scale of ten personal or social situations with some relevance to a sex related response and 100 bipolar semantic differential word scales was created. Two forms of the instrument, each containing the same situations, bipolar scales and instructions (except that in one form the situation applied to a woman), were administered to 110 males at freshman orientation at the University of Maryland. Although the responses to the forms did not appear immediately to measure sexism, a closer examination reveals that sexism appears to be a stereotype reaction to any change in the sex role, for either sex. This is shown by the fact that in many cases subjects were more positive toward a female in a situation than if sex were not mentioned. The report includes the complete results of the study in table form, as well as references. (Author/SES)

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SUMMARY

Sexism or the stereotyped attitudes expressed toward members of a particular sex has not reached the level of social undesirability attained by racism. Therefore little research into clarifying sexism has been conducted. The purpose of this study was to examine the nature of sexist attitudes among male university students. The methodology used in developing the Situational Attitude Scale as a measure of white attitudes toward blacks was used in developing the Situational Attitude Scale for Women (SASW). Ten personal or social situations with some relevance to a sex related response were created as were 100 bipolar semantic differential word scales. There were two forms of the instrument. Each contained the same situations bipolar scales and instructions except that in Form B the situation was applied to a woman. The SASW was administered to 110 males attending freshman orientation. Significant mean differences between forms A and B were determined using t at the .05 level. Thirty two items showed significant differences and in many cases subjects were more positive toward a female in a situation than if sex were not mentioned. The writers interpret these in the context of sexism being expressed as stereotyped attitudes toward females. Men reacted more positively to a female magazine salesman, a policewoman, a female counselor and to a female coworker being promoted. Males reacted more negatively to a female service station attendant, a girlfriend picking up a check, and a female tax consultant. Women were seen as sex objects in several situations including a woman doctor and service station attendant.

Results were discussed in terms of relevant literature and ideas for future research.

Many newspaper headlines and articles have recently been devoted to the changing attitudes toward women. Sexism, or the stereotyped attitudes expressed toward members of a particular sex, has not yet reached the level of social undesirability attained by racism. Therefore little research into clarifying sexism has been conducted. It is nonetheless an important attitude to study, particularly in view of the fact that it affects a majority of our population.

Attitudes toward women could be attempted to be measured using a variety of techniques. However, since racial attitudes have traditionally proven difficult to measure (Shaw and Wright, 1967, Sedlacek and Brooks, 1970) it may be that sexism may be difficult to assess for some of the same reasons. The criticism made of traditional measures of racial attitudes may also apply to measures of sexism; that is, that traditional techniques fail to eliminate the effect of social desirability or faking responses in a positive direction.

The Situational Attitude Scale (SAS) was developed in order to provide a racial context to make difficult the psychological withdrawal from the measure (Sedlacek and Brooks, 1972). That is, white students rate a racist or bigot negatively (Sedlacek and Brooks, 1971) and this may mask their own feelings toward blacks on traditional attitude measures. Sedlacek and Brooks' results indicate that there is a difference between what white students feel are socially acceptable attitudes toward blacks and what their own feelings are.

The effects of social desirability may be less strong in measuring attitudes toward women and more generally toward traditional sex roles; in fact, one suspects that these may mask real attitudes to a similar extent as with racial matters but in the opposite direction. That is,

the writers feel there is some indication that at the present time, it is socially desirable among men to be intolerant to changing sex roles. It must be emphasized at this point that attitudes toward women and attitudes toward traditional sex roles are taken to be synonymous. Sexism is taken as meaning reluctance to view both men and women outside the context of their traditional sex roles. However since women are the ones at the moment who are agitating for change, sexism is often seen as a stereotyped attitude toward the role of women only.

This study was done for the purpose of developing the Situational Attitude Scale for Women (SASW) and for the purpose of gathering some preliminary data on it. The scale includes personal and social situations relevant to male-female relations and sex roles.

Procedure

The original Situational Attitude Scale (SAS) was developed to measure the attitudes of whites toward blacks. The SASW, closely following the format of the SAS, was designed to measure the attitudes of men toward women, or more specifically toward women in non-traditional sex roles. To provide a sexual context and to make psychological withdrawal difficult, ten personal and social situations with some relevance to sex-role stereotyped responses were created (See Appendix). The situations represent incidents where sex might be a variable in reaction to the situation. Ten bipolar Semantic Differential Scales were written (Osgood, Suci, and Tannenbaum, 1957), with scale values of A-E (numerical equivalent 0-4) for each situation. This made a total of 100 items on the SASW (See Table 1). There were two forms of the instrument. Each contained the same situations, bipolar scales and instructions except that in Form B the situation was applied to a woman, and in one case to a man--where a

woman might traditionally have been expected (male nurse). The positive pole of each item was varied randomly from left to right to avoid response set. The Appendix shows the instructions and situations for Forms A and B.

Method

In a pilot study, the SASW was administered to 42 students in a Political Science class at the University of Maryland. As a result of the pilot study the SASW was edited and revised. Only the revised SASW is shown in the Table and Appendix. The SASW was then administered to 151 new freshmen during a summer orientation program. The sample was randomly chosen from 30 possible program dates and should have been representative of all new freshmen. All questionnaires were completed anonymously. Forty one questionnaires were not analyzed since they were completed by women (the experimenters noted which questionnaires were returned by women and these were withdrawn from the sample). Both a male and a female experimenter administered the SASW to control for any sex effect. Questionnaires were passed out randomly so that each student would have an equal chance to receive either Form A or B. Students were not informed of the existence of two forms. Questionnaire administration took 15-20 minutes.

Differences between Form A and B means were compared using t at the .05 level. If there are significant differences they must be attributed to the insertion of the words female, woman, etc., in Form B since all other variables were controlled.

Results and Discussion

Although the format of a racial attitude scale was used in developing the SASW, results of the two scales were not expected to be identical. In fact, it might have been anticipated that they would be quite different. Although feminists often compare the plight of women to that of blacks,

there are many potential differences. Both racism and sexism can be subsumed under the heading of prejudice, which is defined as an aversive or hostile attitude toward a person who belongs to a group, simply because he or she belongs to that group and is therefore presumed to have the objectionable qualities assigned to that group (Allport, 1954). Both women and blacks are subject to much stereotyping (an exaggerated belief associated with a group) which functions to justify conduct with regard to that group. There are differences however. Most men must, for various social and emotional reasons interact frequently with women; not all whites must do so with blacks. Naturally the relationship between men and women is very different than is that of whites and blacks. But in spite of the special relationship that a man has with a woman and in spite of the fact that in many instances he is dependent on her, sex grouping is a very important part of life for many people. Women are viewed as a wholly different species from men; often an inferior species. The primary and secondary sex differences are greatly exaggerated and inflated with imaginary distinctions that justify discrimination. Men's attitudes toward women do not allow for individual differences among women nor do thay ask whether alleged attributes are in fact more common in females than in males or vice-versa (Allport, 1954). So unlike racism, whose largest component is negative affect, sexism may not be negative affect so much as exaggerated assignation of certain characteristics or roles to the sexes. In this light, the data of this study must be interpreted.

Table 1 shows that 32 of the 100 items were significantly different at the .05 level. Sakoda, Cohen and Beall (1954) indicate that only nine tests would be expected to be significant due to chance. This can be taken as evidence that the references to women in Form B caused the subjects to respond differently than they did to Form A.

A closer examination of the statistical analysis points out some interesting patterns. While situations generally varied greatly as to how much they differentiated between the questionnaire forms, two were quite consistent: where a woman was found selling magazines and where she was found as a service station attendant. Less consistent, but nonetheless showing some differentiation between the forms were items where women were seen as counselors, aggressive job applicants, co-workers taking over one's job and girlfriends picking up the check. However, the most interesting finding was that generally attitudes toward women in many of these situations were more positive than they would be to an individual whose sex was unspecified (usually assumed to be a man). When encountering a magazine salesman, men were found to feel more angered and annoyed than they would to a magazine saleswoman. They also felt more cautious toward the male, considered the situation more intolerable and considered the salesman more of an enemy. They were also more excited about the prospect of a saleswomen. It is possible that what is being tapped here is a more or less realistic appraisal of the danger of violence that is faced when seeing a male at the door after nightfall than when seeing a female. This however, is in fact a stereotyped response, as not all males are capable of more violence than are females, nor are all females non-violent.

Likewise, when male students admitted that they felt more nervous being stopped by a policeman than by a policewoman, this again may have indicated the belief that men are more likely to hold power than are women. While this is not necessarily a negative attitude toward men or women, it is nonetheless a stereotyped belief. Again, in the situation where men were seen by a woman doctor, they felt more embarrassed and more aroused than they would have if they had been visiting a male doctor;

an indication that men did not see the doctor only as a professional, but also saw her as a woman. Seeing a woman working as an income tax consultant was considered more humorous than seeing a man in the same position.

The situation arousing the most negative feelings toward women is that where the service station attendant was a female. Men were displeased to find a woman, they lacked confidence and found the situation funny, unexpected and improper. Nonetheless, the female service attendant was still perceived as a feminine and exciting person. This situation reflects on the one hand the generalized (and often erroneous) belief that women have "no head" for mechanics, and that a woman in any situation is still seen as a sex object.

Another situation which caused discomfort in the male subjects, was that where a girlfriend picked up the check. They felt more unsure and annoyed and that paying a check was a masculine thing to do. When a woman applicant for a job was described as bright and aggressive, subjects indicated a lack of surprise and chose the words feminine and exciting to describe their feelings. The lack of surprise could be due to increased male awareness of the women's liberation movement and its connotations.

Situations which were viewed more favorably when women were involved than when men were, included the situation where a woman was seen as the counselor. Men on the whole seemed to be more comfortable and calm with a female counselor. It must be remembered that counseling and psychology fields have traditionally been more receptive to female participation in the past and are seen as an extension of woman's nurturant role in society, (Adams, 1971). Again, this seems to confirm a stereotyped view of woman's ability.

One item did not fit this general pattern. Where a female co-worker was depicted as taking over another employee's job, reactions were to show less disgust and fewer objections and to believe that the situation was more justified than when sex was not noted (Form A).

Although responses to the two forms did not appear immediately to measure sexism, a closer examination disclosed that sexism appears to be more than a negative reaction: more exactly it is a stereotyped reaction to any change in the sex roles, for either sex. The scale in that respect would seem to be a valuable tool for measuring an elusive and complex attitude. However, more studies must be done to check the consistency and generalizability of the results. Additionally studies exploring new contexts and situations should be conducted. For instance Spence and Helmreich (1972) found three factors present in attitudes of males toward females: masculine superiority, equality of opportunity for women, and social sexual relationships. While the SASW appears to contain situations relevant to each of these factors it may prove fruitful to specifically construct new situations around their factors.

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TABLE I

Means, Standard Deviations and t-tests for Forms A and B*

ITEM NO.	SITUATIONS**	FORM A (N=51) MEAN	S.D.	FORM B (N=59) MEAN	S.D.	t***
	I. WOMAN SELLING MAGAZINES					
1	relaxed-startled	1.63	1.10	1.37	1.06	1.22
2	receptive-cautious	2.57	0.95	1.71	1.18	4.11
3	excited-unexcited	3.06	0.96	2.54	1.17	2.49
4	glad-angered	2.29	0.64	1.86	0.65	3.46
5	pleased-annoyed	2.59	0.91	2.05	0.79	3.28
6	indifferent-suspicious	1.80	1.07	1.66	1.19	0.65
7	tolerable-intolerable	1.53	0.98	1.03	0.90	2.74
8	afraid-secure	2.78	0.99	3.07	0.95	1.53
9	friend-enemy	1.90	0.72	1.37	0.76	3.70
10	unprotected-protected	2.61	1.07	2.83	1.11	1.06
	II. POLICEWOMAN					
11	calm-nervous	3.35	0.76	2.64	1.19	3.62
12	trusting-suspicious	2.25	1.08	2.08	1.20	0.77
13	afraid-safe	1.47	0.98	1.83	1.11	1.78
14	friendly-unfriendly	1.29	1.35	1.12	1.04	0.76
15	tolerant-intolerant	1.10	1.29	0.98	0.95	0.53
16	bitter-pleasant	2.08	1.38	2.27	1.22	0.77
17	cooperative-uncooperative	0.51	0.87	0.39	0.74	0.78
18	acceptive-belligerant	1.22	1.05	1.14	0.95	0.42
19	inferior-superior	1.78	0.94	1.97	0.88	1.04
20	serious-humorous	0.80	1.12	1.19	1.11	1.78
	III. WOMAN DOCTOR					
21	apprehensive-confident	1.71	1.11	1.66	1.22	0.20
22	nervous-calm	1.98	1.20	1.71	1.09	1.22
23	angry-jovial	2.63	0.79	2.44	0.89	1.15
24	unsure-sure	1.96	0.88	1.76	1.20	0.96
25	slighted-understanding	2.47	0.87	2.75	1.02	1.50
26	embarrassed-not embarrassed	2.96	1.08	2.19	1.13	3.62
27	confident-not confident	1.53	0.96	1.63	0.99	0.52
28	aroused-passive	2.20	0.93	1.80	1.00	2.13
29	disappointed-elated	2.10	0.45	2.20	0.82	0.81
30	threatened-neutral	3.33	0.83	3.05	1.03	1.55
	IV. FEMALE CO-WORKER					
31	resentful-tolerant	1.00	1.12	1.37	1.12	1.73
32	unjustified-justified	0.94	0.75	1.54	1.06	3.34
33	disgusted-pleased	0.67	0.81	1.15	0.86	3.01
34	incensed-cautious	1.69	0.96	1.95	1.02	1.38
35	angry-calm	0.90	0.80	1.20	1.04	1.67
36	unreasonable-reasonable	1.75	1.20	1.90	1.12	0.67
37	going too far-fair	1.45	1.00	1.81	1.20	1.69
38	acceptable-objectionable	2.80	0.97	2.27	1.19	2.52
39	furious-accepting	1.50	0.98	1.80	1.07	1.48
40	wrong-right	1.45	1.05	1.71	0.95	1.32

*Scale A to E (numerical equivalent, 0 to 4)
**See Appendix for complete situation
***All t values larger than 1.98 are significant beyond .05 (2 tailed test)

TABLE I

Means, Standard Deviations and t-tests for Forms A and B*
(Continued)

ITEM NO.	SITUATIONS**	FORM A (N=51) MEAN	S.D.	FORM B (N=59) MEAN	S.D.	t***
	V. WOMAN COMPLETING INCOME TAX					
41	irritated-calm	2.88	0.90	2.86	1.19	0.09
42	sceptical-assured	2.18	1.02	2.59	1.28	1.85
43	incredible-credible	2.59	0.69	2.83	1.03	1.41
44	useful-useless	1.37	1.15	1.24	1.15	0.61
45	competent-incompetent	1.16	0.92	1.08	1.03	0.38
46	ridiculous-expected	2.51	0.87	2.43	0.87	0.47
47	cheated-fulfilled	2.47	0.78	2.59	0.95	0.68
48	trusting-lack of trust	1.39	0.97	1.48	1.15	0.44
49	inadequate-adequate	2.53	0.94	2.71	1.07	0.91
50	humorous-furious	2.65	1.01	2.21	1.19	2.06
	VI. FEMALE SERVICE STATION ATTENDANT					
51	furious-pleased	3.14	1.07	2.53	1.25	2.71
52	apprehensive-confident	2.41	1.19	1.83	1.30	2.40
53	surprised-expected	2.02	1.24	0.90	1.10	4.97
54	funny-not funny	2.45	1.07	1.42	1.14	4.80
55	confidence-lack of confidence	1.51	1.24	2.00	1.07	2.20
56	silly-proper	3.02	1.04	1.75	1.07	6.26
57	superior-inferior	1.67	0.90	1.93	0.99	1.45
58	excited-not excited	2.60	1.06	2.08	1.18	2.36
59	improper-proper	3.10	1.03	2.03	1.12	5.10
60	feminine-masculine	2.98	0.96	2.42	1.21	2.62
	VII. MALE NURSE					
61	surprised-expected	2.22	1.32	1.98	1.33	0.91
62	feminine-masculine	2.20	1.28	2.44	1.11	1.06
63	slow-quick	2.31	1.15	2.12	0.90	0.99
64	dumb-smart	2.40	0.98	2.44	1.06	0.20
65	out of place-in place	2.33	1.29	2.36	1.23	0.12
66	oddball-normal	2.63	1.17	2.53	1.21	0.44
67	distasteful-tasteful	2.12	1.08	2.32	1.17	0.94
68	proper-improper	1.10	0.98	1.59	1.19	2.34
69	good-bad	1.67	1.23	1.39	1.07	1.25
70	annoyed-pleased	1.71	1.24	1.90	1.07	0.87
	VIII. GIRLFRIEND PICKS UP CHECK					
71	embarrassed-relaxed	2.31	1.11	1.97	1.34	1.45
72	uncomfortable-comfortable	2.33	1.13	2.02	1.31	1.33
73	unsure-confident	2.59	1.01	1.95	1.29	2.82
74	unexpected-expected	1.08	0.95	1.10	1.16	0.11
75	put down-not put down	2.94	1.00	2.56	1.23	1.76
76	hurt-not hurt	2.82	1.10	2.56	1.31	1.13
77	annoyed-pleased	2.78	0.94	2.32	1.33	2.05
78	disappointed-satisfied	2.75	0.90	2.44	1.20	1.47
79	distasteful-tasteful	2.49	0.92	2.34	1.20	0.70
80	feminine-masculine	2.90	1.05	2.37	1.27	2.33

*Scale A to E (numerical equivalent, 0 to 4)
**See Appendix for complete situation
***All t values larger than 1.98 are significant beyond .05 (2 tailed test)

TABLE I

Means, Standard Deviations and t-tests for Forms A and B*
(Continued)

ITEM NO.	SITUATIONS**	FORM A (N=51) MEAN	S.D.	FORM B (N=59) MEAN	S.D.	t***
	IX. WOMAN JOB APPLICANT					
81	good-bad	0.57	0.82	0.80	1.05	1.24
82	surprised-not surprised	1.75	1.04	2.36	1.29	2.68
83	threatening-non-threatening	2.57	0.95	2.76	1.23	0.91
84	unpleasant-pleasant	3.00	0.89	3.03	0.95	0.19
85	provocative-undesirable	1.39	0.93	1.19	1.02	1.09
86	unattractive-attractive	2.45	1.05	2.69	1.12	1.16
87	domineering-outgoing	2.69	0.98	2.53	1.08	0.81
88	problem-asset	2.82	1.08	2.81	1.02	0.05
89	masculine-feminine	0.96	0.93	2.17	1.24	5.67
90	exciting-unexciting	1.64	0.93	1.20	0.84	2.55
	X. FEMALE COUNSELOR					
91	mothered-independent	2.41	1.11	2.20	1.15	0.96
92	gypped-good deal	2.39	1.03	2.27	0.92	0.65
93	uncomfortable-comfortable	1.88	1.17	2.51	1.10	2.88
94	aroused-unaroused	2.02	0.94	2.07	0.99	0.26
95	nervous-calm	1.92	1.22	2.47	1.09	2.48
96	disappointed-elated	2.18	0.76	2.31	0.72	0.90
97	guarded-open	2.25	1.19	2.47	1.01	1.04
98	humorous-serious	2.28	1.28	1.92	1.09	1.59
99	out of place-in place	2.51	1.16	2.54	1.09	0.15
100	masculine-feminine	1.10	.93	2.15	1.22	4.99

*Scale A to E (numerical equivalent, 0 to 4)
**See Appendix for complete situation
***All t values larger than 1.98 are significant beyond .05 (2 tailed test)

Appendix

THE S.A.S.W.

This questionnaire measures how people think and feel about a number of social and personal incidents and situations. It is not a test so there are no right or wrong answers. The questionnaire is anonymous so please DO NOT SIGN YOUR NAME.

Each item or situation is followed by 10 descriptive word scales. Your task is to select, for each descriptive scale, the rating which best describes YOUR feelings toward the item.

Sample item: Going out on a date

happy ' A ' B ' C ' D ' E ' sad

You would indicate the direction and extent of your feelings, (e.g., you might select B) by indicating your choice (B) on your response sheet by blackening in the appropriate space for that word scale. DO NOT MARK ON THE BOOKLET. PLEASE RESPOND TO ALL WORD SCALES.

Sometimes you may feel as though you had the same item before on the questionnaire. This will not be the case, so DO NOT LOOK BACK AND FORTH through the items. Do not try to remember how you checked similar items earlier in the questionnaire. MAKE EACH ITEM A SEPARATE AND INDEPENDENT JUDGMENT. Respond as honestly as possible without puzzling over individual items. Respond with your first impressions wherever possible.

Situations

	FORM A		FORM B
I	It is evening and a person appears at your door selling magazines.	I	It is evening and a woman appears at your door selling magazines.
II	You are stopped for speeding by a police officer.	II	You are stopped for speeding by a policewoman.
III	You have just met your new doctor.	III	You have just met your new woman doctor.
IV	You have just learned that you have been fired and a coworker takes over your job.	IV	You have just learned that you have been fired and a female coworker takes over your job.
V	You meet the person who will complete your income tax return.	V	You meet the woman who will complete your income tax return.
VI	You pull into a service station and the attendant looks under the car hood.	VI	You pull into a service station and the female attendant looks under the car hood.
VII	You are in a hospital and the nurse comes in to give you an injection.	VII	You are in a hospital and the male nurse comes in to give you an injection.
VIII	You go out for a drink with a friend who decides to pick up the check.	VIII	You go out for a drink with a girlfriend who decides to pick up the check.
IX	You are a personnel officer and have just interviewed an applicant who appears to be aggressive and bright.	IX	You are a personnel officer and have just interviewed a woman applicant who appears to be aggressive and bright.
X	You come to the Counseling Center and meet your counselor for the first time.	X	You come to the Counseling Center and meet your female counselor for the first time.